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ABSTRACT

In this publication seven authors discuss school-system decentralization and whether or not it has an impact on curriculum. The first article maintains that decentralization does affect curriculum. It presents a history of the move toward decentralization, considers basic aspects of decentralization, discusses decentralization as it now exists in the U.S., and examines evidence concerning the success or failure of decentralization. The second article asserts that although curriculum-development decentralization has been included in almost all plans for school-system decentralization, there is need for further refinement of roles and services before the former can be achieved. The third article is a study of the impact of school-system decentralization on curriculum development. It reveals that the trend toward administrative decentralization has accelerated during the past five years, and discusses some resultant effects. The fourth article examines how curriculum development has been affected by school-system decentralization in large cities, using New York City as an example. The fifth article discusses the Atlanta public school system's administrative decentralization and some of the problems it has had regarding instruction and curriculum development. The sixth article looks at the attempt to decentralize the Baltimore city public schools, and at some of the problems encountered. The last article discusses accountability and its achievement through decentralization. (PB)

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Impact of Decentralization on Curriculum:

selected viewpoints

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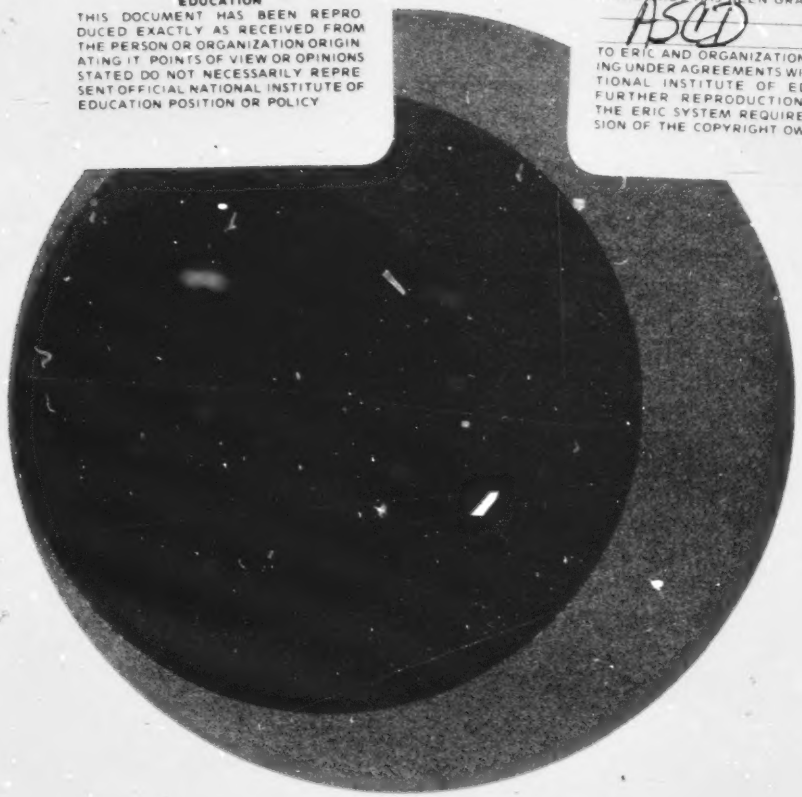

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Foreword

How DO KEY central office curriculum leaders view the effects of decentralization on curriculum in several major cities of our country? The material in this booklet gives us some of their perceptions by way of individual descriptions and also through a survey reported by Gordon Cawelti.

The resulting publication yields some interesting and selective insights and, as should be the case, raises a number of questions for those of us who are concerned with improvement of instruction in large cities.

In 1971, I was the educator-member of a three-person team (along with Larry Doss, Director and Malcolm Dade, Assistant Director) constituting the Office of School Decentralization for the Detroit Public Schools. We all strongly believed in decentralization and found ourselves in the midst of power struggles and contending viewpoints from a variety of sources both within the school system and in the community.

In reading through the manuscript a number of questions came to my mind, as I recalled that tumultuous period:

1. How do the viewpoints of the authors and contributors compare with those of others in those same cities, concerning the impact of decentralization on curriculum? For example, how do regional office administrators, principals, teachers, and community activists perceive what has happened?

2. What specific steps were taken in each decentralized district during and after decentralization to translate form into function? For example, was power to make decisions about curriculum allocated to regions, were curriculum personnel allocated to regions,

was in-service training provided for regional personnel (including principals and teachers) so that they could develop needed skills and knowledge to work on curriculum?

3. How much power was actually delegated to regions in each district in the area of personnel selection, transfer, promotion? The power to make decisions about curriculum must be complemented by the power to make decisions about personnel in order to be meaningful.

4. What is the basic attitude of key administrators toward participation in decision making? The notion that decision making should rest in the hands of top-level administration has the same effect whether it be at the regional or central administrative levels. A basic purpose of decentralization can be to move toward participatory decision making, involving principals, teachers, parents, and students. The odds that decentralization will have any impact on curriculum seem to me to be directly related to whether there is a continuing and systematic commitment to increase the quality and quantity of participatory decision making at all levels.

As several of the authors note, "decentralization" comes in many different forms and with many different meanings and purposes. Whether decentralization has any impact on curriculum at all and whether that impact is salutary is being determined now by the specific purposes of decentralization in each city, the explicit actions taken to achieve those purposes and, most important, the commitment of the people who have power to make decisions to have decentralization affect curriculum development processes.

"Decentralization" is a description of administrative structure or form. The substance of decentralization is embodied in purposes, actions, and commitment of the people involved.

This publication gives us part of a complex picture. The other parts of that picture need to be painted also in terms of the attitudes, feelings, and actions of the participants. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development will be assisting those who want to help complete the "picture" in subsequent publications and conferences.

DELMO DELLA-DORA, *President, 1975-76*
Association for Supervision and
Curriculum Development

Decentralization Affects Curriculum

I. Ezra Staples*

DECENTRALIZATION, unlike many other plans to improve our schools that were first acclaimed as promising panaceas—only to fade quietly away—is continuing to influence change in many of our big city school districts. Gordon Cawelti makes this clear in his study reported in this booklet.

Decentralization is an intriguing as well as an important subject because it represents a reaction to an earlier reform, centralization, which began in the 1890's and continued into the twentieth century. Historically, decentralization was the norm of American education. During the 1890's, the schools of our nation were part of more than 100,000 independent local districts, each having the power to appoint its own board members and raise its own taxes. In the early 1890's, the City of Philadelphia consisted of over 85 school districts; New York City had many more.

Centralization at that time began to supersede decentralization for many reasons:

> . . . when population was sparse, when travel was difficult, when the obligations of state governments were small, and when educational aspirations were low, the district system served a useful function. But when all of these conditions began to change in the nineteenth century, the weaknesses of the district system and its inability to provide equal educational opportunity became increasingly apparent. It was then that far-seeing educators began to try to overcome the weaknesses of decentralized control of schools and to reassert the authority of the state governments in education control and support. But loyalty to the district

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system proved tenacious in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and often served to block educational progress and adaptation to new educational and social needs.[1]

It is ironic, in the light of today's educational ferment, that the last sentence quoted above embodies one of the most frequently heard accusations now being made against *centralized* school systems!

Centralization, then, was an attempt to correct local abuses. It was also, however, a concept that most Americans were suspicious of and moved only slowly and reluctantly to implement. This can be seen by the fact that in 1870, when our nation was on the threshold of celebrating its Centennial with a great exposition in Philadelphia that would reveal to the world proof of our industrial and technological progress, there were only 27 urban school superintendents in our country, and these were confined to cities located in 13 of our 37 states.[2]

Many of these superintendents had little control over education in their cities. School-connected jobs were largely politically controlled; those who aspired to serve as teachers had to be acceptable to the local ward leader. Here is the way this situation was described in 1897:

> Ward politics is the great bugbear of the city school law-makers, and any amount of inventive genius has been exercised to devise a way of choosing school boards that would make it possible for the ward boss to interfere. Incompetent principals and teachers chosen to "encourage" the political henchman; contracts corruptly given to fatten the treasuries of partisan organizations; assessments of teachers for campaign funds; unseemly intrigues, strifes, and bickering within the schools themselves by adherents of different parties . . . all these evils and more are feared by those who have seen the results when local politics has had undue influence.[3]

We are not discussing an extinct phenomenon from our dim

[1] R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin. *A History of Education in American Culture*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953. p. 104.

[2] Edgar W. Knight. *Education in the United States*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1941. p. 305.

[3] James C. Boykin. "Organization of City School Boards." *Educational Review* 13: 234; March 1897.

past. There are teachers still living today who remember having to be "cleared" by the local political bigwig in order to get their jobs, and that such clearance often involved a financial contribution to the party in power. Centralization was instituted partly to eliminate such abuses; it was hoped that quality public education, fairly and efficiently administered, would result. By the 1920's, when centralization was deeply entrenched in most local school systems, some educational leaders wanted even more of it:

> It would be better for the child in the schools if practically all . . . powers (such as selecting teachers, instructional materials; determining curriculum, salaries, and length of the school year) were taken away from the local school trustees and transferred to county educational authorities, for handling in a way that would secure rather uniform results throughout the county.[4]

Today, however, decentralization is being advocated as a means of combating the "abuses" allegedly resulting from the earlier reform. Centralization has been equated by some with a cumbersome bureaucracy, unfeeling to the needs of children (especially minority children) and teachers. Decentralization, claim its partisans, will provide opportunities for community input and will restore to people the feeling that they are not powerless, that they are in control of their own destinies, and that their wishes and aspirations are being taken into account in the education of their children. (There is no doubt that this feeling of powerlessness is not limited to big city slums and that its violent manifestation is not restricted to any single racial or ethnic group. This was vividly illustrated in 1974 during the militant protests of parents in Charleston, West Virginia; and in 1975 in Butler, Pennsylvania, when parents protested some of the new literature intended for use in public schools.)

Some critics feel that the current thrust toward decentralization is a smoke screen behind which its proponents are hiding their machinations to obtain greater political power. "Many community board of education meetings," claimed Albert Shanker, "have been marked by confrontations between rival local political forces vying

[4] Ellwood P. Cubberley. *An Introduction to the Study of Education and to Teaching*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925. pp. 80-81.

for patronage." [5] The fact that power is an important element in the thrust toward decentralization cannot be denied:

> The balance of power in urban school systems, as in all political systems, is determined by the distribution of the resources of power. Control of public policy results from control of vital resources, such as jobs, funds, social status, and expertise.[6]

Aspects of Decentralization

With this in mind, let us consider some basic aspects of decentralization. The word is often used to designate several different things, and in any dialog we have on the subject, we should make sure that we are talking about the same thing. It is also important to be able to thread our way through its several distinctions because each can have a different impact on curriculum planning. Allan C. Ornstein has made some convenient differentiations:

1. *Administrative decentralization:* "The locus of political power remains with the single, central administration and board of education. The system is broken into administrative or smaller units, and sometimes these units are further subdivided. By breaking down the system, in theory, the administration is brought closer to the schools and community, and there is closer communication between the schools and central office. The decentralized field administrators, such as the district or area superintendents and school principals, attain the power to make some decisions which were formerly made at the central office. Accountability is still directed upward, not toward the community."

2. *Community participation:* "Community participation usually results in the formation of advisory committees . . . comprising various combinations of representatives of parents, community residents without children attending the public schools, teachers, administrators, students, local business, political, religious, and social

[5] Albert Shanker. "Decentralization II: The New York Experience." Where We Stand: A Weekly Column of Comment on Public Education. (Paid advertisement.) *New York Times*, August 15, 1971.

[6] Marilyn Gittel. "The Balance of Power and the Community School." In: Henry M. Levin, editor. *Community Control of Schools*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1970. p. 115.

agencies. Committee members are usually appointed by the school principal, if the committee is operating on the school level, or by the field administrator and/or central office administrator, if the committee is operating on the decentralized or central level . . . it does not transfer decision-making authority to that community."

3. *Community control:* "Carried to the fullest extent, it means decision-making power by the community (or so-called representatives from the community) over personnel (hiring, firing, and promoting), curriculum (course electives, ordering textbooks), student policy (student-teacher relations, discipline, testing and evaluation), and financing (federal funding, allocation of money, even determination of the budget). In short, the powers of the professional educators are abridged—an act most school personnel reject." [7]

Each of these three types of decentralization brings its own implications to curriculum development, as will be pointed out by the contributors to this publication. Furthermore, we must be careful not to assume that any single kind of decentralization leads automatically to any one inevitable outcome. For instance, even with *administrative decentralization*, the central office staff can be indispensable as an organizer and catalyst in activities leading to the improvement of instruction. In some cities, the teachers' union has been a force in this direction by bargaining for a contract which includes representation of all districts on curriculum committees. However, where citywide curriculum committees are not mandated, members of district curriculum committees still welcome opportunities to meet with colleagues from other parts of the school system to exchange ideas, discuss mutual problems, and plan ways of doing a better job.

In other instances, the central office is in a unique position to give districts such needed services as preparing and publishing curriculum guides; maintaining an audiovisual materials lending library, a curriculum materials and resources information exchange, a permanent exhibit of all textbooks and other instructional aids used by the schools; and presenting an annual citywide exhibit of new materials. These are not peripheral functions, but are intrinsic

[7] Allan C. Ornstein. *Metropolitan Schools: Administrative Decentralization vs. Community Control.* Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1974. pp. ix-xi.

to curriculum planning. Moreover, for the central office to maintain its credibility with the districts, it must perform these services humanistically as well as efficiently.

Community participation is a type of decentralization that enables all segments of the community to contribute to curriculum development, and, at the same time, to delegate the final decisions to the professional staff of the school system on both district and central office levels. A recent expression of community participation has been the representations by ethnic minority and women's rights organizations against negative racial and sex stereotyping in textbooks. Local school districts have reacted more quickly to community input in these matters than have the commercial publishers. This reaction has been in the form of creating courses of study, organizing teachers' workshops, and preparing other instructional aids. Many special programs have evolved in response to community demand for more "relevant" instruction, including programs to combat student alienation, lack of motivation, and drug abuse.

Community participation is welcomed by most educators because it is undoubtedly the most fruitful relationship between the community residents and those to whom they have delegated the function of teaching. But even within the context of this relationship, the educator must maintain a delicate balance between responding to public demand to adopt the latest fashionable innovation and knowing when to protect children from quackery and faddism. If the educator hesitates in responding to community pressure, he or she is often accused of being too conservative or even of obstructing school improvement. Despite this handicap, educators seem to find that community participation gives an important dimension to curriculum planning.

In theory, *community control,* the third form of decentralization, assumes complete authority over curriculum planning. This would seem to follow logically if local residents can hire and fire teachers, decide which subjects may be taught in addition to those mandated by the state and by college entrance requirements, which textbooks may be used, and how money should be spent. In actual practice, the expertise of the professional educator is still needed, and the community begins to realize this when it becomes engaged in the day-to-day operation of the schools. The selection of textbook and instructional aids is a good example. Members of com-

munity groups who have tried to consider which of these materials to adopt, from the thousands available annually for evaluation, have found themselves hopelessly bogged down and have been happy to give this job back to members of the professional staff.

Community members soon realize that the exercise of leadership in school districts is a full-time job. What has happened, therefore, is that those advocating total community control have tried to get rid of educators they do not trust, and replace them with educators to whom they are willing to delegate authority. Their success in doing this has been mixed and involves issues now being fought in courts throughout the country. But a fundamental truth remains: in the predictable future, curriculum development will remain in the hands of professionals.

Mutations Have Developed

As decentralization now exists in America, the three versions described by Ornstein do not operate in their pure forms. Circumstances and milieu have resulted in mutations. Thus, Barbara Sizemore, Superintendent of Schools in Washington, D.C., defines decentralization as

> . . . the redistribution of power from a centralized Board of Education and of authority from centralized Administration to local community units so as to *increase* (italics ours) citizen, parent, teacher, and student responsibility in the total governance of the schools.[8]

She also states that

> This community stands ready to *reduce* its base of power so that all segments of the school community can be included in the *sharing* of power and the formulation of policy.[9] (Italics ours.)

Such a concept of decentralization cannot be categorized neatly as "community participation," but neither is it exactly "community control," since it speaks of *reducing* (but not relinquishing) the administration's power base, *increasing* the responsibility of citizens

[8] Barbara Sizemore. *Decentralization*. Washington, D.C.: District of Columbia Public Schools, April 1974. p. 1.

[9] *Ibid.*

(but not necessarily abdicating the administration's responsibility), and *sharing* power and policy making.

Similarly, Seelig Lester gives a clear example of decentralization in the chapter he has contributed to this publication. He shows that the 1969 ground rules for decentralization in New York City provided that although community boards have the power to determine curriculum, and can even choose textbooks and other instructional materials, all such materials must first be approved by the Chancellor, as the New York City Superintendent of Schools is called. This is only one of several instances cited by Lester that highlights the collaboration between the community and the central board.

Two other contributors to our publication, Vernon S. Vavrina of Baltimore and Sidney H. Estes of Atlanta, also confirm that central administration still plays an important role in curriculum planning. This is particularly significant in Atlanta, for administrative decentralization has been in effect there since 1955. Estes believes that curriculum planning and development can profit from central office leadership. Such leadership, he states, cannot be consistently expected from decentralized staffs because they devote most of their time to serving the day-to-day needs which arise in districts. Vavrina points out that decentralization has been advantageous to the central office staff. It has helped, he reports, to make central office curriculum planning more effective by relieving central office supervisors from administrative duties not related to upgrading curriculum.

One of the "red herrings" of education is that decentralization is opposed by many central office administrators. Marilyn Gittell writes that "the conclusion can be drawn that the major obstacle to creating a new balance of power that includes community control is the tenacity with which a small group in the centralized city school system endeavors to maintain its position of power." [10] She cites New York as an example of this, although the city was divided into 31 separate community school districts (later 32) after the Legislature passed the School Decentralization Act in 1969, allocating some powers to the local boards and some to the central board.

[10] Gittell, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

In the light of Gittell's statement, it is particularly interesting to survey New York City's experience with decentralization. An analysis of this experience would fill several volumes, but it is timely to note now that three years after the decentralization law was implemented in New York, Kenneth B. Clark, its most eloquent original supporter, announced that he had made a "180-degree change" on decentralization.[11] He termed it a "disastrous" experience whereby "racial politics" took precedence over "what I think schools should be concerned with; namely, teaching children how to read and write."

Clark also accused the teachers' union of protecting mediocre teachers and of selfishness in diverting energy away from real changes in the classrooms.[12] But the union had its own complaints about decentralization. In a "report card on decentralization" panel discussion, one teacher complained: "Decentralization has created 32 small bureaucracies that are growing and flourishing and that are plagued by nepotism, patronism, and corruption."[13] Some teachers, it was reported, "expressed objections to being monitored and 'harassed' by parents and community groups that they said lacked expertise in teaching." One panel participant, not a UFT representative but a member of a local community board, said that decentralization "created a new class of quasiprofessionals who feel they know a good deal about education but really don't." He described the group as composed of parents, community groups, and sometimes school board members "who try to inflict their half-baked ideas about education on school officials."

The New York City experience with decentralization is also of value to educators in other cities because its day-to-day developments have been chronicled in the daily press, particularly by the *New York Times*, which is available, of course, in many libraries throughout the nation. Yet in all fairness, it would be simplistic to argue that decentralization in New York City contains the seeds of its own destruction if we base our conclusions solely on evidence

[11] Francis X. Clines. "Clark Asks a Curb in Decentralizing." *New York Times*, November 30, 1972.

[12] Michael Knight. "School Decentralization Backers Dismayed by Clark's Criticism." *New York Times*, December 1, 1972.

[13] Nathanial Sheppard, Jr. "School Decentralization Called Disruptive at UFT Parley Here." *New York Times*, March 10, 1974. p. 14.

found in news stories. As the Commissioner of New York City's Community Development Agency has pointed out, the success of the experiment requires a high degree of commitment and dedication from powers outside the community. He also implies that a centralized supervisory function is still necessary:

> Decentralization did not lessen the need for centrally placed and highly influential leaders to provide commitment, direction, and courage.
>
> Officials and leaders in the field of education must remain accountable for setting standards, maintaining a high degree of intensity in the search for solutions to problems, and protecting the rights of parents and children when selfish interests threaten to victimize them.[14]

The Commissioner also stressed that successful decentralization requires cooperation and assistance from forces *outside* the school system itself. He cites the case of one local school district:

> Where the education system has clearly been sabotaged by a patronage-crazed group from the local political clubhouse, the pleas of parents for help from the Board of Education, the State Education Commissioner, and the Board of Regents have fallen on deaf ears. It is shameful for the members of the same oligarchy which turns its back on local problems to then wash their hands and hold the local community or the decentralization process responsible for the continued decline of the schools. . . . There is a basic unwillingness of the members of the leadership class to take off their shoes and wade in the mud with people of the ghettos jointly to seek ways to reshape blundering institutions and make them more useful in their quest for a better life.

Success or Failure?

What actual evidence is available concerning the success or failure of decentralization? Unfortunately there are few hard-data, objective results to consult. As Ornstein states: "Most of the statements about administrative decentralization and community control are based on dubious claims, half-truths, or unsupported evidence."[15] Lorraine M. Sullivan of Chicago, whose paper appears

[14] Major R. Owens. Letter to the editor. *New York Times*, December 11, 1972.

[15] Ornstein, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

in this publication, discusses ASCD's recent study of 46 urban school districts, and the conclusion that their decentralization did not lead to curriculum improvement.

Given such an uncertain climate, can the educator be held responsible for the quality of learning in school systems where decentralization is being tried? Larry Zenke of Orlando, Florida, contributes a valuable chapter exploring this subject. Like Commissioner Sheppard, he believes that the most important commitment at this time is that of heightened sensitivity to the needs of children—that accountability must be equated with responsiveness.

How is this to be achieved? Responsiveness implies action. Is it primarily a matter of putting out brush fires? Sidney Estes, in this booklet, implies that educators find it difficult to cope with day-to-day specific school problems; and, simultaneously, to be held responsible for scanning the horizon of the future. Perhaps, then, the first step toward responsiveness lies in determining which tasks can best be done by the central staff, and which by the district staff.

It is obvious that the central office staff can perform certain functions more efficiently than the district offices can; for example, in the field of curriculum development. Here the central office staff can provide not only the leadership mentioned previously but also can provide for a degree of consensus. Doing so should not be confused with ignoring individual differences of learners and returning to the academic lockstep. Those of us who deal with parents are constantly receiving complaints from them that their children are often confused by different curricula, materials, and methods when transferring from one school to another within a large school system. In this highly mobile era, such variety can be a problem to the child. Increasingly, there is a demand for some kind of agreement (actually, the word most used by parents is "uniformity") as to what students should be learning in such subjects as English, mathematics, social studies, and science as they advance from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. In Philadelphia, for example, it has been necessary to publish such a syllabus.[16]

In many decentralized school systems, each district has tried to prepare its own teachers' guides and resource materials, resulting too often in hastily-prepared, mediocre materials, and in unneces-

[16] *Suggested Curriculum K-12* (Tentative). Philadelphia: Office of Curriculum and Development of the School District of Philadelphia, 1973.

sary duplication of effort. Without central supervision, materials have emerged which are, to put it mildly, of questionable value. It should not be assumed, however, that only a decentralized district has the potential for adopting questionable "innovations."

A central office curriculum committee, particularly one that draws its membership from districts throughout the city and combines this with full-time subject specialists and superior resources, can look at the course of study with more objectivity and make sure that there is less distortion of perspective. At least one big city school system went so far as to abolish all central office curriculum specialists. This apparently has not worked too well, for we hear that the central office professional staff in that city is now in the process of being restored.

Regardless of whether we consider decentralization successful or unsuccessful, desirable or undesirable, there is no doubt that it has left a firm imprint on public school education. The community will continue to be heard from and to be listened to. At present, the relationship between the central office and decentralized district staffs is often a kind of wary collaboration. Hopefully this contact will mature into a more trusting and effective symbiosis.

In the current literature, reference is sometimes made to the "power" that educators (particularly administrators) have, and that this power is used to fight decentralization. Yet those of us in the field know that our concern is not so much about whether centralization or decentralization should prevail as it is a matter of doing what is best for children and young people. The good administrator realizes that regardless of whether centralization or decentralization prevails—if the system does not work, if the learner does not learn—then the problems engendered by this arrangement result in frustration and misery to all concerned. If administrators have any vested interest at all, it is in evolving a system that works best for children. In a very real sense, school administrators these days are somewhat like the farmers of Vietnam and Cambodia whom we have seen in recent years on TV newsreels, trying to plough their fields and cultivate their rice paddies while shells whistled all around them.

What is needed is the application of calm, dispassionate, professional analysis of what is required to give the most effective support and leadership for curriculum development, classroom

instruction, selection and utilization of instructional materials, supervision of instruction, continuous staff development, evaluation of learning, and teaching effectiveness. These processes must be carried out in ways which will be most productive in terms of the fulfillment of our mission and not in terms of building bureaucratic structures or accumulating power—at any level: school, regional or district, or central.

Urban School Decentralization and Curriculum Development: Views and Implications

Lorraine M. Sullivan*

DECENTRALIZATION OF CURRICULUM development has been included in almost all plans for school system decentralization. It has been advocated as an approach that will be more responsive to student needs and involve greater teacher participation in the development process and therefore result in better utilization. Proponents feel that, in particular, current curriculum implementation or delivery of service has been poor. They feel that curriculum developed centrally does not reach the desired consumer, claiming that teachers in many cases do not use the centrally designed curriculum. In all too many instances, this has been true. The quality of the instructional program does not reflect the quality of available curricular materials.

Teachers in many cases have indicated that they did not need the support that curriculum developers feel is provided by centrally developed curriculum. In many instances, principals, although charged with instructional leadership, spend a disproportionate amount of their time on problems which encroach on the instructional program. Frequently, representatives of commercial instructional material producers become important decision influencers at the local school level because they are able to make on-site presentations for faculty and bring information about the new commercial curriculum materials. Educators should keep in mind that there must be an educational framework which gives substance to

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the instructional direction of the school system in each discipline.

Decentralization of curriculum development has as a major tenet the systematic increase in decision-making responsibilities for teachers and principals. Ideally, the principal must become a copartner with teachers in curriculum development at the local level. In turning responsibility for curriculum development to personnel at a decentralized level (preferably the local school), certain problems must be recognized and dealt with. Teachers at the local school level, in many cases, are not ready to accept responsibility for all instructional decisions. They have had little experience with decision making in curriculum development for which they will be held accountable. They vary in the quality of their preparation and experience for writing curriculum. It has been traditional for teachers to let others make instructional decisions about what will be taught.

There is marked evidence that, in many decentralized school systems, principals and teachers are taking more initiative in making instructional decisions. They have become involved in assessment of instructional needs of students, sensitive to community curriculum expectations, and aware of varying learning modalities and teaching strategies. They are working cooperatively to seek better ways of organizing students within the school for instruction. They are engaging in more in-depth study of instructional materials, identifying suitability to achieve their instructional goals in each subject area. They are beginning to use curriculum guides as a learning framework which can be tailored to local needs. In Chicago, there has been marked evidence of this kind of in-depth study and planning by principals and teachers in the implementation of the new Chicago Reading Program.

Decentralization of curriculum development cannot be viewed as a means of producing curriculum for each school with less expenditure of funds. When a school system approaches a problem which calls for customized curriculum development, it must be cognizant that the costs of such an approach will be greater. At the local school level there must be time for teacher curriculum writers to engage in study, research, planning, and evaluation.

Curriculum development is a process which requires certain considerations:

1. The nature of the subject and its developmental goals must be considered.

2. Existing curriculum materials should be analyzed to determine how well they meet the students' needs.

3. A needs assessment of the students should be made to determine what they need to learn, what purposes are to be achieved, and how well they are currently achieving with the existing curriculum.

4. The research of scholars in the field needs to be known by the curriculum developers for its impact on the curriculum to be developed.

5. Various instructional approaches need to be identified for their responsiveness to child development learning styles and the nature of the subject.

6. All available materials of instruction need to be identified.

7. The behavioral objectives of the subject in both the affective and cognitive domain need to be identified.

8. Field testing of the new curriculum for clarity and effectiveness of the suggested instructional activities, materials, and teaching strategies must take place.

9. Refinement of the curriculum must occur in response to the classroom field testing.

10. The curriculum must be subjected to ongoing reevaluation.

A recent study by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in 46 of the nation's largest school districts on the relationship of curriculum development and decentralization does not indicate great improvement as a result of decentralization. There are many reasons for the apparent lack of improvement. One aspect of the problem results from the presence of fewer curriculum specialists in the decentralized staffs. Therefore, there are fewer people to give leadership to train teachers and principals at the local level and to implement curriculum. Decision making has been placed at the local school level with very little guidance for the principal and staff.

There is little evidence of a change as a result of decentralized curriculum development in instructional level decisions which guide

a school system concerning what subjects will be taught at what level in the educational program. In addition, there is little evidence of change in societal level decisions within a school system leading to differing criteria for graduation from elementary or high school.

School systems still feel that there must be identification of the school systemwide goals and objectives which can be adapted to local school needs. The Illinois Office of Education requires each school system to identify systemwide instructional goals and indicate provision for district and local school tailoring of developmental learner objectives in learning cycles. Variations and responses to relevancy in instruction in the local setting are expected to include instructional options, teaching strategies, activities, and materials as selected by the principal and staff and/or individual teachers.

There is need for further refinement of roles and services before decentralization of curriculum development will be achieved in decentralized school systems. Decentralization has made educators more responsive to communities. Ideally the curriculum department should become the technical assistance resource for each school as it tailors curriculum to assessed needs.

Urban School Decentralization and Curriculum Development Strategies

Gordon Cawelti*

URBAN SCHOOLS in recent years have frequently found themselves under attack by "romantic critics," special interest groups, and students. Especially in a period of social protest, students and parents have often demanded a greater voice in decisions affecting education in their communities. Likewise, many persons and groups have contended that bureaucratic organizations in the big cities are not responsive to logistical or instructional problems in individual schools.

The institutional response to these issues of citizen participation and logistical responsiveness often has been that of administrative decentralization. Regional offices were usually established with a line officer, designated as Area or Assistant Superintendent, in charge of a small staff of curriculum specialists and other professionals. This new level of administrative organization between the central office and building level often came into being with minimum guidance as to its role or function.

Several studies have sought to ascertain the extent or nature of the administrative structures that have been evolving and to analyze the impact of citizen participation, yet only very limited work has been done to determine the impact of decentralization on curriculum development strategies. This latter function represents the focus of the study reported here.

Curriculum development, in the context of the present study, is broadly defined as including such activities as needs assessment and goal setting, selecting and organizing learning materials and

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teaching methods, and evaluation. Staff development activities are also very much a part of this process.

This study is intended as an initial probing of one aspect of decentralization: its impact on curriculum development. Respondees were primarily central office curriculum leaders and no attempt was made to validate their judgment at other levels of the organization. In addition, no attempt was made to contribute to the literature on the efficacy of citizen participation in the governance of public education.

Purposes of Study: (a) to ascertain the extent to which urban school systems have decentralized the administration of their schools; (b) to obtain opinions on the workability of decentralization in terms of the management of curriculum development; (c) to begin development of an instrument for clarifying role and function issues at various echelons of decision making in decentralization; (d) to analyze and contrast avowed purposes of decentralization with actual results in terms of moving decision making closer to the levels affected; and (e) to obtain information to help us understand more about the change mechanisms now utilized in urban school systems.

Data Sources: Mail survey of some 50 of the nation's largest school districts (generally those in cities with populations in excess of 250,000). Respondees were Assistant or Associate Superintendents for Instruction. Some data included in describing the types of decentralization were taken from an earlier study by Allan Ornstein.[1]

Results: Twenty-six of the 46 districts included in this study (57 percent) reported they were administratively decentralized and 20 reported they were not. Although some districts reported regional or area intermediate units for attendance or service purposes, they were not classified as decentralized in a regional sense if they did not have a line officer such as an Area or Assistant Superintendent in that office. Fifteen of the 26 decentralized districts have made the change in the past five years.

Availability of Curriculum Specialists

About half the respondees from decentralized school systems

[1] Allan C. Ornstein. "Administrative/Community Organization of Metropolitan Schools." *Phi Delta Kappan* 54 (10): 668-74; June 1973.

	City	Enrollment	Schools	Area (A), Region (R), District (D)	Year
A. Decentralization with regional offices and regional "school boards" with policy making authority.	New York City	1,106,000	950	32D	69
	Detroit	260,000	320	8R	71
B. Decentralization with regional office and regional committee acting in advisory capacity (appointed by the central board or chosen through a mechanism set by the board).	Portland	63,633	121	3A	70
	Chicago	500,000	561	3A, 27D	68
C. Decentralization with regional offices but not having regional "school boards."	Philadelphia	276,000	285	8D	•
	New Orleans	95,719	135	4A	54
	Atlanta	86,000	144	4A	56
	Dade County	240,000	235	6A	65
	Nashville	85,000	136	3D	66
	Indianapolis	92,000	125	3R, 10A	69
	San Antonio	73,000	97	3A	69
	Pittsburgh	70,000	152	3A	69
	Seattle	69,025	130	2R	69
	St. Louis	93,000	140	5D	70
	Los Angeles	727,681	662	4 Zones, 12A	71
	Houston	213,000	225	6A	71

Oakland	55,000	91	3R	71
Memphis	139,115	168	4A	71
San Francisco	76,000	135	7 Zones	71
El Paso	62,580	62	3A	72
Greenville	57,000	96	5A	72
Minneapolis	59,000	86	3A	73
Cincinnati	79,000	102	4 el.D/2 sec.	73
Baltimore	184,000	204	9R	73
Washington, D.C.	130,000	190	6R	74
Louisville	44,675	67	–	70

D. Decentralization but not reporting area or regional offices or "school boards."

E. Districts reporting not to have regional, area, or district offices or school boards.

Wichita, Denver, Columbus, San Diego, Jacksonville, Toledo, Tucson, Long Beach, Charlotte-Mecklenberg, Norfolk, Phoenix, Boston, Fort Worth, Tulsa, Omaha, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Cleveland. (Dallas has regional service offices for elementary schools; Milwaukee has a "cluster" plan.)

Number adopting prior to 1960 = 3
Number adopting 1960–1964 = 0
Number adopting 1965–1969 = 8
Number adopting 1970–1974 = 15

• Many years ago.

Figure 1. Nature of Administrative Organizations Reported

Issue or Task	Echelon	Most influence	Some influence	Least influence	Findings
1. Ordinarily makes decisions on assigning new teachers to a particular building	Central	11	3	3	Most–Central Office
	Regional	4	4	5	Least–Building
	Building	2	9	6	
2. Makes the decision in selecting which basic materials to purchase for an elementary school reading program	Central	4	5	8	Most–Building
	Regional	2	7	5	Least–Central Office
	Building	12	3	2	
3. Makes the basic determinations as to how given amounts of Title I funds are to be spent	Central	9	4	4	Most–Central Office
	Regional	1	7	4	Least–Building
	Building	7	3	7	
4. Has the responsibility and resources for carrying out a program of in-service education for teachers	Central	10	1	6	Most–Central Office
	Regional	4	6	3	Least–Building
	Building	3	8	6	
5. Selection of building principal	Central	8	5	4	Most–Central Office
	Regional	8	6	0	Least–Building
	Building	1	4	10	
6. Determine final plans for the modification of a school's physical plant such as removing halls for an Instructional Materials Center	Central	9	3	5	Most–Central Office
	Regional	1	9	3	Least–Building
	Building	7	5	6	
7. Would make the decision to install differentiated staffing plans in a building	Central	4	5	7	Most–Regional
	Regional	7	6	1	Least–Central Office
	Building	6	5	5	
8. Deciding to alter the existing social studies program to include a sizeable unit on environmental education	Central	7	3	7	Most–Building
	Regional	1	11	1	Least–Central Office
	Building	10	2	5	
9. Determine particular goals and objectives for a certain school	Central	1	3	12	Most–Building
	Regional	1	12	2	Least–Central Office
	Building	15	2	0	
10. Develops a plan for reporting to patrons in the community on the extent to which an individual school is meeting its goals	Central	4	2	13	Most–Building
	Regional	2	11	0	Least–Central Office
	Building	11	3	3	

Figure 2. Decision-Making Echelons in 17 Decentralized Cities

reported that fewer curriculum specialists are now available than before decentralization. Three reported no change in the number of specialists available while two indicated more were available. Several comments indicated that as more curriculum improvement activities were undertaken, there was a recognition of greater need for specialists in that principals rarely had time to perform these functions.

Responsibility for Initiating New Instructional Programs

The most common reply was that this was a shared responsibility. That is, initiative could come from the building level, the regional office, or the central office. There was a slight tendency to respond that the initiative normally came from regional or central office persons.

Purposes of Decentralization

"Responsiveness" was the concept that appeared most often when the respondees were asked about the purposes of decentralization in their city. In classifying these responses, the purposes were grouped into four categories. This classification produced no surprises insofar as the literature on decentralization is concerned:

1. *To promote community involvement:* help base the program on the community's needs, provide for community participation.

2. *To promote administrative effectiveness:* reduce size of administrative unit, move decision making closer to implementation site, respond to need for social services, improve planning and problem solving ability on local school level.

3. *To promote administrative efficiency:* reduce overlap of services, engage schools in priority setting and resource allocation, and encourage program budgeting.

4. *To provide for greater curriculum and instructional improvement:* greater responsiveness to student needs, promote interdisciplinary and inter-level coordination, improve K-12 articulation, improve instructional quality, increase teacher participation in curriculum development, and respond to needs of a particular geographic area.

Because all decentralized systems did not provide data on their purposes and since it was difficult to sense priorities for any of these purposes, no attempt was made to quantify or rate these responses in importance.

No rationale or policy statement was located that came to grips with the problem of a "standardized" instructional program and variations were bound to develop with autonomous regions or buildings.

Judging from the data reported elsewhere in the study, and from earlier research, it would appear that considerable refinement and improvement are needed before these decentralized organizations can be said to be fulfilling the purposes expressed for them. On the other hand, if a sense of participation or "ownership" in the school system can be demonstrated (not a part of this study), such a result alone may well justify the adoption of the decentralized administrative structures.

Decision-Making Echelons

The data in Figures 2 and 3 are based on the responses of persons from 17 cities reporting to be decentralized. The rankings

Central Office	
Most influence	*Least influence*
1. Teacher assignment	2. Selecting elem. reading materials
3. Title I expenditures	7. Install differentiated staffing
4. In-service education	8. Alter social studies program
5. Principal selection	9. Determine a school's goals
6. Building modification	10. Reporting to patrons
Regional	
Most influence	*Least influence*
7. Install differentiated staffing	
Building	
Most influence	*Least influence*
2. Selecting elem. reading materials	1. Teacher assignment
8. Alter social studies program	3. Title I expenditures
9. Determine a school's goals	4. In-service education
10. Reporting to patrons	5. Principal selection
	6. Building modification

Figure 3. Amount of Influence at Central Office, Regional, and Building Levels

	Average Rating	
Curriculum and Instruction	25.7	10—Provides strong leadership
Logistical or Administrative	18.5	20—Provides good leadership
		30—Uncertain, uneven
		40—Poor leadership
		50—No leadership

Figure 4. Leadership Provided by Regional Offices

under each of three categories indicate wherein the most and least influences reside with regard to several different issues.

It would appear that there has been only a very limited shifting of decision-making authority from central to regional offices. Further study is needed on the extent to which this shift is intended, and to validate the central office leaders' (who completed this survey instrument) perception of how much real authority has been shifted to the building level. These findings would tend to conflict with other impressions and discussions of the erosion of principals' authority resulting through the advent of public sector bargaining.

Regional offices were rated higher in terms of their leadership contribution in logistical or administrative matters than they were on curriculum and instruction matters (see Figure 4).

Conclusions

1. The trend toward administrative decentralization has not abated but rather has accelerated during the past five years, and 25 of the 46 urban districts included in this study (52 percent) reported that they had decentralized. Of the 25 urban school districts reporting to be decentralized, 15 have accomplished this organizational change within the past five years. The trend may be leveling off since many of the 20 districts reporting not to be decentralized said that this was not being considered at present.

2. Only New York and Detroit have adopted a community control organizational model having regional school boards with policymaking and resource allocation authority.

3. The respondees indicated that in many instances, since decentralization, there were now fewer curriculum specialists available to schools. However, most urban curriculum leaders felt there

was much need for such persons now to help make new instructional developments available to classroom teachers.

4. There was evidence that accountability for curriculum improvement may not have been substantially strengthened since the responsibility for initiating new instructional programs was most commonly said to be jointly held between central office, regional office, and building personnel.

5. It would appear that a strong curriculum leadership role on the part of regional or area office personnel has not yet emerged. The most influence on several important administrative or instructional tasks either remains in the central office or has been delegated to the building level. Only on the issue cited having to do with "deciding to initiate differentiated staffing" was the regional office rated as "most influential."

6. Regional or area offices were also rated as providing stronger leadership on administrative matters than they were on curriculum and instructional issues.

7. Considerable effort has been made to obtain citizen participation at the building level. More than half of the districts reporting to be administratively decentralized said they had advisory groups for *each* individual school and almost all of the others said such groups existed at some buildings. Whether or not these citizen advisory groups are all something other than the traditional PTA or PTSA kinds of groups was not ascertained in this study, but in several cities such advisory groups have replaced the PTA. Recent policy changes in the PTA make it possible for them to function now much more as a citizen advisory group than they traditionally have in many communities.

Urban school districts that have decentralized their administrative structure will help improve their accountability if greater effort is made to clarify the level at which initiative for curriculum development activity is expected to originate. Some larger districts now see central office curriculum specialists as product developers but as lacking a mechanism for diffusing new instructional programs out to the schools. Generally, it is a waste of time and money if no change mechanism exists for helping teachers out in the schools learn what new instructional materials are available and how their teaching practices need to be changed. A major problem in urban

districts is finding an effective mechanism for curriculum renewal that can be felt citywide, and it does not appear that administrative decentralization has helped in this area thus far. However, there are some indications that community participation in school affairs can be focused on substantive instructional issues to the benefit of a school and its students.

Although not a part of this study, discussions with representative urban curriculum leaders reveal concern for the following problems which are very much in need of additional investigation to determine trends:

1. In recent years, it has almost become conventional wisdom that the local building faculty in urban districts should have considerable flexibility, if not autonomy, in developing its reading or mathematics program. The high mobility rate of many low income pupils in the inner city has made it clear that it is not in the best interests of such pupils to encounter a half dozen different reading programs. As a result there may be a trend back to a more standard, citywide reading program. In some instances, the competencies needed at each grade level have been identified in a continuous progress type of program with a variety of instructional materials then used to help students attain these competencies.

2. Urban school districts are employing a variety of strategies to help diffuse new instructional practices. However, they need massive help if a citywide change in learning strategies is to be brought to all teachers in a particular subject area. Only a few districts are seeing the local faculty as the fundamental unit of change. Among the staff development strategies being emphasized to help diffuse new instructional practice are teacher centers, after-school faculty meetings, summer employment of teachers, and released time for teachers during the school year. Inflationary times are seeing dwindling rather than increasing resources for curriculum development activities in most urban districts. Rarely does one find urban districts that are able to promulgate a curriculum renewal plan that will be viable over a period of years.

The provision of additional resources to help diffuse improved instructional practice in the nation's urban school systems is much more urgently demanded than further rhetoric by the "romantic critics."

How Has Curriculum Development Been Affected by Decentralization in the Large Cities?

Seelig Lester*

THE ABOVE TITLE is fascinating: As administrators, we always insist upon clear definition of the words used in our deliberations. Therefore, let us first examine the words: "How" implies that there has been, could be, or would be an effect on curriculum development. Next, the word "development" must be considered. When one thinks of development it is considered as a process of evolvement; a process of starting with what we have and going forward, or finding that what we have is inadequate and should be discarded or must be developed and/or evolved with a new approach. "Decentralization" has meant many things to many people in the "large cities" of the United States. To some it has meant decentralization of policymaking authority and responsibility. To others it has meant decentralization of the administrative structure so that while policy would be determined centrally, administrative interpretative action is divorced from central authority. To still others it has meant total community control with many former professional prerogatives, such as selection of instructional materials, curriculum content, and teacher evaluation, becoming the responsibilities of "community" representatives and not that of their professional employees.

The key word in the title is "curriculum," a simple word, a complex concept, a concrete foundation. Regardless of decentralization, centralization, fragmentation, or what have you, the curriculum is still the cornerstone of education.

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Definition of Curriculum

The word curriculum is and always has been used in a variety of ways. Our Roman forebears, speaking Latin, used the word to mean "a racecourse," a "runaround." Although many of the detractors of public education have maintained that our young people are getting a "runaround" in modern society, the Latin origin of the word has been largely forgotten and it is generally used to mean:

1. The written courses of study and other instructional materials used by a school to achieve its goals

2. The subject matter presented to the students

3. The course offerings available within an educational institution

4. The planned experiences of the students under the direction of the school.

To this writer, none of the above is adequate nor is a combination of all of them sufficient. While we accept all and include all, we feel an insufficiency in terms of present needs and trends. Unless we include in our concept of curriculum a total planned program of experiences available to individual learners, we are ignoring all that educational theory, research, and practice have shown us. Indeed, we would continue to look upon the curriculum as a set of disjointed experiences, each of value in itself, but unrelated to each other in terms of the overall purposes of the school, the school system, or the clients served.

Having thus defined our terms, let us address the question: Has decentralization affected curriculum development in the large cities? *Yes!* How? *Most positively!*

Let us explain: To understand schools and school systems, one must relate them to the surrounding cultural, economic, historical, philosophical, and political circumstances. Since education is always an expression of a civilization and of a political and economic system, schools must harmonize with the lives and ideas of the men and women in a particular time and place. Since the social environment today is in a state of change, descriptions of society and its needs in the 50's or 60's can no longer suffice. As a major element

in curriculum planning and development, present social forces must be regularly considered.

Our professional educators in the large cities considered these social forces. They recognized that educational reforms of a sweeping and significant nature rarely have come about through the action of the schools in and of themselves. They knew that educational practice tends to reflect what society chooses to support in the classroom. They also knew that a massive political effort to change the structure of schools meant that society was telling them that the existing educational practices were not what was expected.

It became obvious to those of us who are, or were at that time, professional educators that there had developed an erosion of reliance on professional authority by large segments of the public, including our students. Although it was part of the disenchantment among the general population of the inner cities with the so-called elite who were leading the masses, it also reflected frustrations in family life, in business affairs, and in education. It was seen by educators as a demand by the poor, the disadvantaged, and others for a voice in shaping the programs that affect them. And, professional educators reacted more rapidly than did politicians. They read headlines such as: "Too Much Book Learning, Too Little Life Learning," "Schools Get an F Mark," "A Grim, Joyless Place Called School."

As a result, school people no longer examined only the writings and the thinking of professionals but they opened their ears and their minds to others as well. They began to reorient their concepts of traditions; they began to listen to youth; they began to replace the irrelevant in the curriculum with more meaningful educational experiences. Subject matter content was more carefully and realistically examined so that all students could identify with the past and find for themselves a place in the future. In the final analysis, if the curriculum in the educational scheme is to be successful, the educational process must produce people prepared to take a productive place in society.

They began to break down the watertight compartments of distinct subject disciplines and created interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum implementation. They found instructional and learning possibilities existing beyond the four walls of the classroom.

They saw possibilities in mini-schools, short unit courses, open classrooms, and the like. They began to react with positive approaches to community and parental concerns. They realized the greater need for more serious and creative approaches to problem solution. Incidentally, when we speak of "they" we refer not only to the central headquarters experts, but also to the leadership in individual schools.

New York City Decentralizes

Partly as a result of the public disenchantment which was discussed earlier, in the spring of 1968 the legislature of the State of New York directed the Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York "to prepare a plan for the development of a community school district system in such city, amending the education law, . . . in relation to the powers and duties of local school districts in such city." [1]

This amendment to the education law stated that to achieve "a more effective response to the present urban educational challenge requires the development of a system to ensure a community-oriented approach" based on "maximum local involvement in education." Consistent with these findings, and in compliance with chapter 568 of the laws of 1968, the Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York developed a plan [2] which would, in the main, give elected community boards of education responsibility for meeting, and the authority to meet, the particular educational needs of their communities and their children.

At the same time, other interested groups, such as the State Department of Education, the Office of the Mayor, all interested professional associations, parents' groups, and others, developed plans of their own, all of which were considered by the legislature during the 1969 session and resulted in the passage of an amendment to the education law which created a New York City Community School District System.[3]

[1] Chapter 568 of the *Laws of 1968*, New York State.

[2] *Plan for Development of a Community School District System for the City of New York*, Board of Education of the City of New York, 1969.

[3] New York State Education Law, Section 2552, Article 52-A.

This new organizational structure provided for the continuation of the city (central) board and the establishment of between 30 and 33 community districts, each of which would have its own elected board of education. The Act spells out the powers and duties of community boards, community superintendents, the city board, and the chancellor (as the statute indicates, a position comparable to the city superintendent of schools). Those powers and duties which are pertinent to this discussion are enumerated below.

A. Powers and duties of community boards. . . .

3. Determine matters relating to the instruction of students, including the selection of textbooks and other instructional materials; *provided, however, that such textbooks and other instructional materials shall first have been approved by the chancellor.* (Italics added.)

4. Generally manage and operate the schools and other facilities under its jurisdiction.

B. Powers and duties of community superintendents.

1. . . . Under the direction of his community board, each community superintendent shall have:

a. The same powers and duties with respect to the schools and programs under the jurisdiction of his community board as the Superintendent of Schools of the City School District of the City of New York had on the effective date of this article.[4]

C. Powers and duties of the City Board.

The City Board . . . shall have all the powers and duties the interim board of education of the City District had on the effective date of this article, *and shall determine all the policies of the city district.* (Italics added.)

In addition, the City Board shall have power and duty to:

1. Approve determinations of the chancellor relating to *course and curriculum requirements.* (Italics added.)

D. Powers and duties of the Chancellor.

He shall have all the powers and duties as the Superintendent of Schools of the City District. . . . He shall also have the power and duty to: . . .

[4] Note the inconsistency between this provision and the italics in section A.

8. Promulgate minimum educational standards and curriculum requirements *for all schools and programs throughout the city district.* . . . (Italics added.)

We have now come full circle and are back again to our definitions. The New York State Law has decentralized the structure and at the same time has made it a responsibility of a central body to "promulgate minimum educational standards" and to "approve textbooks and other instructional materials" and to "determine all policies of the City District."

Establishing Minimum Standards

We stated earlier that decentralization has had a positive effect on curriculum development in the large cities. We supported that contention generally and now conclude with one specific item growing out of the one city upon which we have concentrated. The law, as indicated, required the "establishment of minimum educational standards." We pointed out earlier that professional educators recognized the signs leading to such things as decentralization and went to work. In the city under discussion, the professional educators on the central staff read the law and even before its effective date went to work on developing "minimum standards." As they did, it became clear, very quickly, that despite the multiplicity of curriculum bulletins which they and their predecessors had developed and which were available, they had never defined the behavioral objectives to be sought and developed.

The result was a document that recognized the need for a fundamental core of learnings to be derived from educational experiences. Recognized also was the fact that newness can be justified only in terms of a clear and precise statement of goals and a means for verification of their attainment. In short, they concluded that a consideration of minimal outcomes was feasible and crucial to educational improvement and to pupil gain both in learning and in personal development.

Their efforts resulted in more than 150 pages, covering every discipline taught, and which for each of them provided differentiation in types of learning. More important, each learning type was specified by the categorization of behaviors into skills, knowledge, and concepts along with attitudes, appreciations, and values. Each

statement was behaviorally structured for observable performance as the measure of pupil achievement.[5]

Was it effective? Did the decentralized community school districts accept it? Who knows? The only available indicator at this point in time is the fact that a year after the release of the publication it was out of print and still in great demand.

[5] *Minimum Standards of Pupil Performances.* Bureau of Curriculum Development, Board of Education of the City of New York, 1972.

Decentralization: Origin and Effect in Atlanta

Sidney H. Estes*

THE ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, contrary to the experience of most large urban school systems, has had a long history of administrative decentralization. It should be noted that Atlanta's organizational structure is described as being *"administratively* decentralized," as there is some difference between administrative decentralization and the kind of decentralization that has occurred to a much more extensive degree in New York City and Detroit, Michigan. Atlanta's school areas do not have an independent or autonomous Board of Education that operates in conjunction with the administration of each area in relation to personnel, budget, or curriculum matters.

Atlanta is presently organized into four geographical areas, which is a term used synonymously with districts or regions in other school systems denoting administrative units. It originally began with five districts and remained so while Atlanta had 115,000 students enrolled. In recent years, the enrollment of the Atlanta School System has, for various reasons, declined. The diminishing school enrollment reached a level of approximately 86,000 during the school year 1972-73; therefore, it was felt by the Central Administration that there should be a reorganization of the school system in recognition of that figure. Atlanta was reorganized into four basic areas, each serving approximately 30-35 schools with an overall total population of about 85,000 students.

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In March of 1955, the Atlanta Board of Education formally authorized a study of the organization, administration, and financing of the Atlanta School System. Five nationally outstanding educators accepted an invitation to serve as a Study Council. The Atlanta School Study Council was chaired by John E. Ivey, Jr., Director of the Southern Regional Education Board, who was joined by Walter A. Anderson, Chairman of the Department of Administration and Supervision of the School of Education, New York University; Daniel R. Davies, of the Division of Administration and Guidance, Teachers College, Columbia University; John H. Fischer, Superintendent of Schools, Baltimore, Maryland; and R. L. Johns, Professor of School Administration at the University of Florida. The report finally evolving from the work of this group became known as "The Ivey Report," and it is credited with the initiation of the concept of decentralization in the Atlanta Schools.

At the time of its investigation, the committee made it unequivocally clear that the organizational, administrative, and financial arrangements of the school system were wholly inadequate in view of the then rapid growth of the pupil population in the Atlanta Schools. The Study Council's findings and recommendations were ultimately submitted to "The Citizens' Committee" for review and approval. The work of the Council was an outgrowth of research and study which involved members of the Board of Education, school personnel, and citizens of the community.

The Citizens' Committee reviewed the study, then suggested and approved or rejected recommendations. In a final statement, it indicated that, although not unanimously in agreement on every point, it endorsed the report and stressed the necessity for the Board of Education and the Superintendent to effect immediately the many changes recommended.

One of the changes recommended for further improvement of instruction related to decentralization of the school system. The Study Council suggested that:

1. The school system should be reorganized to provide a decentralized area administration needed in a large and rapidly growing city like Atlanta. The reorganization would include:

A. Appointment of a Deputy Superintendent of Schools responsible for internal management of the system to relieve the present burden on the Superintendent's office

B. Division of the city into five or more areas, and appointment of an area superintendent for each area to be responsible for the operation of the schools in that area

C. Formal provisions for obtaining advice from citizen groups at all levels of school operation: the individual school, the new area organization, and the Board of Education

D. Broad opportunity for the school staff to participate fully in development of policy and program.[1]

In the report, the Citizens' Advisory Committee stated: "We believe that if the members of the Board of Education and the school administration will carry out the recommendations in this report, the people of Atlanta will do everything else that is necessary in order to give Atlanta an outstanding school system." [2]

These items of information are cited to establish the credence given at that time to this new arrangement in the Atlanta Schools. This is particularly noteworthy in tracing the history of the decentralization effort in the Atlanta Schools because it reveals the fact that much time and thought were given to the recommendations. Historically, however, the recommendations have not been carried out in their entirety. This may or may not have influenced the success, or lack of it, of decentralization of the Atlanta Schools.

The Study Council noted that many changes had occurred in Atlanta (and the world) from the time the educational goals of the school system evolved to the time of the Council's creation. The Council suggested that there was a renewed interest in public education and that certain conditions should be met in making provisions for joint continuous reappraisal of the educational aims of the schools. One of the salient conditions to be met was:

Policies and procedures which further the ways of democracy, place primary emphasis on constant improvement of the educational program, and develop close ties with the community. This means:

—Teacher and principal participation in developing policy and educational programs

—Citizen participation in evaluation and planning school programs

[1] The Atlanta School Study Council. *Schools for Atlanta's Future.* Atlanta: Atlanta Public Schools, December 1953. p. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. xii.

—Continuous evaluation and experimentation to improve teaching.[3]

Clearly this condition brought the matter of curriculum development and revision into the arena of broad participation. It was set forth as a very greatly needed "plank" in a platform for improving Atlanta schools.

In discussing the instructional program of the Atlanta schools, the Council indicated many positive aspects of the school system. However, it stated that "all of the instructional services—the professional leadership, supervision, and other aids to teachers and principals—come from a small centralized staff," which the Council felt inadequate for a system of Atlanta's size in 1955. The Council felt that a growing system would find it increasingly difficult to relate the instructional services and planning of the instructional program to the needs of the several population groupings throughout the city.

As an outgrowth of this and other observations, the Study Council believed that extensive modifications of the arrangements and conditions for teaching and learning were needed. Among them was the matter of administrative organization. In this regard, the Study Council suggested the establishment of a "sound central office and systemwide organization; divide the city into several school service areas; and provide school centered programs for continuous evaluation, revision, and improvement." [4]

The matter of the organization of the Atlanta School System was of prime importance to the Study Council. In the report of the Council, a special section addresses this matter, and reveals specific reasons which were germane to the concept of decentralization. The Council cited the following:

The present plan of organization of the Atlanta School System, which might prove satisfactory for a small city, is quite inadequate for a large metropolitan center. . . . Atlanta may reasonably expect its population and its wealth to increase steadily. Atlanta will need more schools and a diversified educational program. . . . Like other large cities, Atlanta faces the necessity of decentralizing its school system without sacrificing the advantages and the efficiency which flow from

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

uniform centralized management. And, as administrative groupings and channels are designed, provisions must also be made for citizen and staff participation at all levels. Only through such a combination can any school system obtain both the operational efficiency and the sound policy development and evaluation required for truly democratic schools. . . . As the school system is presently organized, the Superintendent is expected to do the impossible and principals are denied the assistance and support they need. . . . There is a great and immediate need to reorganize both the central staff and the field staff to relieve the superintendent's office of its present impossible burden, to clarify and fix the responsibility and authority of staff members, and to assure the most effective communication throughout the system.[5]

The Study Council also recommended that the school system be reorganized and that the objectives of such a reorganization were to:

1. Tie the instructional program more closely to the needs of the people it serves
2. Provide additional specialized resource services to schools and teachers and make these more readily available
3. Provide a clear chain of command through which needs will be identified, staff services will be channeled, and decisions will be made
4. Provide a workable span of supervision and direction
5. Provide for broad participation in policy formulation.[6]

Concomitantly, each area was to have an Area Citizens' Advisory Committee, out of which would come the Atlanta Citizens' Advisory Council to the Board of Education. The purpose of such a suggested arrangement was to offer "a two-way exchange of communication between school and community."

The Study Council also felt that the size of the Atlanta School System dictated a critical organizational problem. The Study Council suggested that it was almost impossible to operate the school system centrally; it therefore set forth the following:

The Atlanta School System's most critical organizational problem arises from its sheer size. This system serves a population of 500,000 persons spread out in a number of different neighborhoods and com-

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 30.

munities over a geographical area of 126 square miles. It has approximately 100,000 pupils, more than 3,000 teachers, and 129 principals. It is almost impossible for a small centralized administrative staff to stay in direct contact with the problems of this many people and provide the necessary professional leadership and competence to assure that the educational goals are achieved throughout the city. The Study Council therefore recommends that the school system be divided into not fewer than five geographical areas for administrative purposes.

In addition to being essential for effective administration, the decentralized "area organization" is a logical extension of and can serve to revitalize the community high school program initiated in 1946. It has the additional potential advantage of extending the community-centered program to the elementary school level and of tying the elementary school programs more closely to the high schools to which their pupils transfer.

An Area Superintendent should be designated for each of the geographical areas. His duties should include:

a. Representing the Superintendent in the area and serving as the officer administratively responsible for the operation of the school program in the area.

b. Working with and through principals for the continuous improvement of the schools in the area.

c. Interpreting to the Superintendent (or Deputy Superintendent) the needs of his area.

d. Coordinating into a team operation the work of the various specialists who will assist with and supervise the instructional program.

e. Working with citizen groups in every appropriate way to use their help in improving the schools.[7]

It should be pointed out that item "d" may be a cause of some concern and confusion when one considers the following statements advanced by the Council regarding operating procedures:

As the instructional services are strengthened and expanded, a staff group should be assigned to each area to work with the Area Superintendent, principals, and teachers to improve curricula and instruction. This staff group should be so selected as to provide balanced strength in the several curricular areas and in elementary and secondary education. In the central office, the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Ser-

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

vices would work in a planning and facilitating relationship to the instructional staff on a citywide basis.[8]

In addition, an organizational conflict may have been created, and may still exist, growing out of the following:

The general function of all four of the central services will be to furnish all necessary and available help to the area superintendents and the schools. The assistant superintendents are to have no administrative authority over principals, since such line relationships will go through the area superintendents. The assistant superintendents will report to the Superintendent through the Deputy Superintendent.[9]

Further, it would appear that the role of the administrator most responsible for instruction is somewhat nebulous or amorphously defined in this job description:

Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services. This Assistant Superintendent should be responsible for establishing, stimulating, and coordinating a comprehensive program of instructional and curricular services. These should include personnel and material resources for principals and teachers in elementary, secondary, vocational, adult, and special programs. The foundation of these services will be the development of curriculum materials and direct assistance to the teaching staff through workshops, consultants, and the active involvement of every appropriate resource inside or outside the school system.[10]

It is difficult to comprehend the charge presented regarding responsibilities of this individual in light of the suggested role of the Area Superintendent and the respective Area Citizens' Advisory Committees. This, indeed, has historically created some problems in Atlanta relating to curriculum development.

Perhaps one significant weakness of the decentralized arrangement in the Atlanta Schools relates to the lack of follow-through alluded to earlier. The Study Council recommended that a Curriculum Council be formed, to operate in the following manner:

The Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services should be chairman of this group which will deal with all types of questions affecting instruction. The group may identify needs, propose new projects,

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

evaluate programs, or engage in such other activities as they develop, or are assigned to it by the Superintendent. It will maintain a close relationship with the area curriculum councils, the community, and sources of professional help.

The membership of the curriculum council should include teachers, principals, parents, and instructional specialists, each of whom should serve for a specified time. Members should be drawn from the several areas, the central office, and the system at large.

The work of the Council should be deliberative rather than the direct production of materials, which is the function of the staff for instructional services. To assure good discussion with full participation, the size of the group should probably not exceed twenty.[11]

Such a body has never existed or formally operated as described. Perhaps if such a body were to come into existence, much confusion, competitiveness, and lack of coordination would be dissipated.

The lack of understanding of role responsibilities seems to have historical significance in Atlanta's decentralized arrangement regarding curriculum development and supervision. Until very recently, curriculum specialists assigned at the central and area levels attempted to accomplish similar tasks. There has not been a clear delineation between the need for personnel to accomplish instructional supervisory tasks as opposed to others needed in the areas of curriculum coordination, articulation, and development.

Curriculum development for an urban school system must allow diversity without destroying unity of purpose. A central staff must provide leadership in planning and developing materials which are basic to all learning situations, but which are also avant garde enough to present the best of current trends as a challenge for those local schools which are ready for it.

Decentralization establishes a situation in which area office staff members must be everything to everybody, which makes it impossible for them to have the time to stay "on top of" current trends in specific fields. It also creates a time-limit pressure which prevents them from planning and developing curriculum.

There is no definable line between planning and implementing or between developing and facilitating. If curriculum development

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

is to be practical and meaningful, it must occur as a cooperative venture involving both central and area staff.

It is at this point that the human element determines the success or failure of the undertaking. Can the area personnel express their needs and the central office staff produce material in a way that is mutually productive? If this question can be answered affirmatively, decentralization will have no adverse effect on curriculum development. If not, the result will be disastrous.

It would appear to be unreasonable to expect curriculum specialists to be most effective in their positions if they are expected to carry out both functions on a regular basis. It is now felt that personnel at the area level should, and can, be most effective in maintaining instructional supervisory roles, working closely with principals and teachers on a daily basis. If that is the case, then clearly there is little time for curriculum planning and materials development. Thus, the role of central office assigned curriculum specialists becomes more clearly defined. An arrangement of this type is being attempted currently in the Atlanta Schools.

This is not a simple and clear-cut structure which is flawless, nor is it an easily flowing arrangement. It is difficult to convey in a limited number of words the many intricacies, political strategies, and other interactions which consistently occur in a decentralized school system. The matter, and degree, of autonomy is yet another reality and point of concern, which must be addressed initially and continuously.

In summary, although the Atlanta School System has been decentralized "administratively" for nearly 20 years, it has not been free of problems in regard to instruction and curriculum development. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, but this report has not attempted to identify all of the critical variables. After 18 years, the concept of decentralization remains a source of concern and study in the Atlanta schools. Certainly this realization offers further challenge and *raison d'être* to those of us concerned with and involved in the art and science of public administration and organizational development.

Baltimore City: Reorganization and Curriculum

Vernon S. Vavrina*

Planning for Reorganization

WHEN ROLAND N. PATTERSON assumed the duties of Superintendent in October 1971, he listed as one of his main objectives for the year the development of a decentralization plan for the school system.[1] On November 1, 1971, the Superintendent organized a task force and charged it with the responsibility for developing decentralization options. The options were presented to the community and staff for their consideration and opinion.[2] A specific plan was then developed by the Superintendent and his staff, presented to the Board of School Commissioners, and approved in August 1972.[3]

[1] The Superintendent. *Options for Decentralization.* Baltimore: Baltimore City Public Schools, January 1972. p. 2. Studies related to the administrative decentralization of the Baltimore City schools were made in 1969-70 during the superintendency of Thomas D. Sheldon, presented to the Board of School Commissioners, and disseminated to the general public. Although there was general understanding and agreement from nearly all sources that some form of administrative decentralization was desirable, the School Board did not move to implement the recommended plan. See: *Minutes of the Board of School Commissioners,* September 17, 1970, pp. 598-99; November 5, 1970, pp. 738-46; "Administrative Decentralization." Baltimore: Department of Education, November 5, 1970. pp. 1-20. (Mimeographed.)

[2] The Superintendent, *op. cit.,* pp. 3-19.

[3] Roland N. Patterson. *Reorganization Plan for the Baltimore City Public Schools.* Baltimore: Baltimore City Public Schools, 1972. pp. 1-16.

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After two years of intensive study and planning, the Baltimore City Public Schools began the implementation of the Reorganization Plan during the school year 1973-74.[4]

The primary aim of decentralization was to provide children, youth, and adults of Baltimore City with quality instruction and programming. Through the establishment of nine regions, the schools would be brought closer to the people they serve. Reorganization would result in improved communication and better working relationships and instruction would be enhanced by the resulting release of the creative energies of community and staff.

Prior to reorganization, unmet needs identified in the area of instruction included the following:

Greater accountability for delivering instructional services

Greater instructional flexibility

Alternate learning paths to meet the different learning styles of children and youth

Assured relevancy of the curriculum

Improved in-service training of teachers, particularly in the area of reading instruction.[5]

Essential to the improvement of curriculum and the quality of instruction was a new concept of supervision. The decentralization plan included reorganization and relocation of the central office supervisory staff with the responsibility for implementation of instructional programs placed closer to the local level.

Implementing the Reorganization Plan

The Baltimore City Public Schools in 1974-75 serve an enrollment of 184,000 pupils in 204 schools. In each of nine regions, there are approximately 25 schools (elementary, secondary, and special) with regional enrollments ranging from 19,000 to 24,000. A Regional Superintendent serves as the chief administrative officer and is responsible for the administration and supervision of all aspects

[4] *Reorganization of the Baltimore City Public Schools.* Baltimore: Baltimore City Public Schools, 1974. pp. 1-114.

[5] Roland N. Patterson. "The Superintendent's Annual Report, 1971-72." *Staff Newsletter* 26 (1): 3; September 5, 1972.

of the educational programs for schools assigned. Within guidelines established for the system, the Regional Superintendent develops regional goals and priorities relating to curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and budget. The Regional Superintendent recommends instructional materials to be used, assigns staff on the basis of needs, and provides leadership for professional development programs.

In each region an Instruction and Staff Development Team consisting of a Regional Specialist and five Educational Specialists works under the direction of the Regional Superintendent for the improvement of instruction and curriculum development in the schools of the region. Their roles are both supervisory and consultative in nature. The team members, representing various areas of specialization, work closely with senior teachers and department heads of the various schools. Central office coordinators in the various disciplines staff the Division of Instruction and Curriculum Management and work closely with the instructional teams to ensure systemwide coordination while maintaining necessary regional flexibility. Every specialized subject is not represented on the Instruction and Staff Development Team; however, a school's senior teacher or department head assists in answering a particular need when the area is not represented.

In the fall of 1973, the implementation phase of decentralization necessitated the reassignment of some 120 central office staff members to the regional offices, 54 of whom were assigned to Instruction and Staff Development teams. Although the latter group consisted of professionals who had been working in the area of supervision, the assignment to regions required changing roles.

Prior to the end of the first semester, the progress of the Reorganization Plan was impeded when negotiations with the teacher bargaining representative, the Public School Teachers Association, did not materialize in a new contract. Failure to arrive at an agreeable solution ended in a strike from February 4 to March 4 when 85-90 percent of the 8600 teachers and 70 percent of the 184,000 pupils remained out of school.

To further complicate the implementation of the Reorganization Plan, on February 5, 1974, the school system received a letter from the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, indicating that "further desegregation of Baltimore City Schools is necessary and feasible." The submission

of school desegregation plans for accomplishing further desegregation of both students and staff in the public schools of Baltimore City was required. The plans were to be operational by September 1974.

The task of preparing an adequate desegregation plan for HEW has continued to the present. Much time and effort have been devoted to the matter by the school board and professional staff. The interests and emotions of the entire community have been aroused. To date, in addition to the involvement of elementary and junior high pupils, the desegregation plan has resulted in the reassignment of approximately 1200 teachers and administrators.

The influence of the long teachers' strike and the conditions brought about by the HEW directive added to the current economic situation necessitating severe limitations in staffing and in procurement of instructional materials and supplies have had impacts upon the school system that have made it difficult to evaluate the true effect of decentralization on curriculum.

Curriculum Strengths Realized

During the year and a half that the school system has been operating under the Reorganization Plan, the following strengths of curriculum design and improvement have been realized:

1. The inclusion of all grades (pre-K–12) in unified curriculum planning has provided a means for ensuring continuity and consistency in the total educational program. The pre-K–12 approach precludes fragmentation of programs and allows for a unified, sequential instructional program which should result in greater student progress.

2. Since administrative offices are located in neighborhoods, parents are able to relate more easily to all phases of public education including matters relating to curriculum and instruction.

3. There are increased opportunities for participation and input from community members, students, parents, and staff through the creation of numerous curriculum advisory committees.

4. The central office subject matter coordinators and specialists who were previously separated by educational levels have been brought together in the Division of Instruction and Curriculum

Management and have developed an increased number of interdisciplinary projects, workshops, and curricula. Reorganization has made possible the development of closer relationships among the disciplines and has provided a continuing means for ensuring basic understandings of the philosophy, goals and objectives, and programs of each discipline. The centralization of curriculum personnel has provided an identified, available source of human and material resources for staff, student, and community utilization. Elementary teachers are now able to receive help in the implementation of programs from subject matter specialists who previously had serviced only secondary schools.

5. As a result of decentralization, many past administrative duties performed by supervisory staff members have been eliminated for central office curriculum personnel. To date, this has freed most of the Division of Instruction and Curriculum Management staff to concentrate on curriculum matters; for example, discovering and publicizing current trends in their discipline, and surveying teachers' needs more effectively.

6. The regional Instruction and Staff Development teams, together with secondary school department heads and elementary school senior teachers, are available to help teachers solve basic problems relating to curriculum implementation and teaching methods. Writing teams in the regions are able to develop new materials and adapt citywide curricula to better meet the needs and interests of students in their area.

7. The procedures developed under Reorganization for the evaluation of instructional materials and supplies have been greatly simplified. Significant steps have been taken through staff development activities to update teaching methods with particular emphasis on the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and social studies.

8. In implementing decentralization, new human resources and potential leadership have been discovered among staff members assigned to new responsibilities.

9. Decentralization provides an increased likelihood that the curriculum will have a positive influence toward improving the quality of instruction and learning by providing greater flexibility in the program.

10. As regional Instruction and Staff Development teams gain experience, more time and opportunity should become available for central office curriculum staff members to gain greater feedback from the field regarding needs for curriculum change and design and to explore more creative approaches to instructional problems.

Curriculum Concerns Faced

During the implementation of the Reorganization Plan, the following concerns that have a bearing on curriculum design and improvement have been raised and have been the object of administrative planning designed to overcome recognized weaknesses:

1. There have been insufficient staff (educational and secretarial) and inadequate funds in the Division of Instruction and Curriculum Management to produce and reproduce instructional materials for the schools. In addition, monies allotted to the regions for innovative projects have been severely limited.

2. Many staff members at the central office and regional levels have had to learn new roles and in the process some confusion has resulted regarding the division of responsibility between the regional Instruction and Staff Development teams and the central office Division of Instruction and Curriculum Management. Difficult personnel problems have had to be solved and central office subject matter coordinators have had to devote considerable time to help resolve these matters.

The redeployment of subject matter specialists to duties that did not capitalize on their backgrounds has caused concern. Many regional team members were elementary-school trained generalists and felt insecure in dealing with secondary school problems. Likewise, former secondary supervisors found it difficult to relate to lower elementary school instructional matters.

3. There is a tendency on the part of some former central office supervisors to work in traditional ways and to view the regional offices as requiring an extra step in communicating with the teacher. Some teachers who have worked with a specific central office supervisor also prefer the former relationship to the regional setup.

A number of central office curriculum personnel felt that they could not visit schools on an open basis and were therefore unable to evaluate effectively instructional needs or the degree of implementation of programs developed in cooperation with their offices. Clarification of this concern has been taken care of by the Superintendent's direction.

4. In the transition to decentralization, the services of central office personnel were not fully utilized in employment, assignment, and transfer of personnel and some unnecessary problems resulted due to the inexperience of newly appointed regional staff members. Time was required to solve the problems and develop guidelines for the future.

5. In most cases, regional personnel are not familiar with philosophy, goals and objectives, and content of the highly specialized areas of the curriculum. This has necessitated special efforts to bring needed resources to the schools.

6. In an effort to solve current problems during the transition period, it was very easy for staff to fall back into former habits and ignore new procedures. Continuing efforts to review the Reorganization Plan and to maintain its administration have been required.

Time and staff are needed to realize fully goals for developing curriculum models and materials and training staff to implement new ideas. A continuing program of staff development has been designed to overcome the lack of real understanding of reorganization at teacher and administrator levels.

Concluding Statement

In a process as complex as decentralization of the large Baltimore urban school system involving thousands of persons, it is unreasonable to expect instant transformation to the new order. Wisdom requires avoiding premature generalizations related to the new organization whether they be positive or negative.

Despite efforts of the system to prepare all members of the staff for decentralization, additional time will be required to realize fully the objectives of reorganization. Although local school, regional, and central office staffs have devoted their energies to needs assessment and goal setting, additional progress will be required to

achieve optimum coordination of services and develop necessary competencies related to new job responsibilities.

Up to this point in time, decentralization has not been given a sufficient chance for implementation in Baltimore because of the many pressures which the school district has had to face. Problems related to the teachers' strike, desegregation, and budget have clouded the issue and it is still too soon for a final judgment as to the effects of decentralization on curriculum design and improvement.

Under decentralization, the Baltimore City Public Schools look ahead optimistically to excellence in instructional programs through greatly improved curricular offerings. Essentially, Reorganization of the Baltimore City Public Schools has been positive for curriculum development and implementation.

Toward Accountability Through Decentralization

Larry L. Zenke*

FEW WORDS HAVE INVOKED so much response in the educational arena over the past couple of years as has the word "accountability." Accountability, or more precisely the lack of it, has become the excuse used by many politicians for not adequately funding public education. Accountability, with the accompanying insinuations that educators have been blatantly irresponsible and unaccountable for their efforts, has raised the ire of many educators. And then there is "accountability" in the minds of parents. Just what does accountability mean to the majority of parents and the general public?

Some individuals, when defining accountability for the general public, define it in terms of PPBES (Program Planning Budgeting Evaluation System). They apply cost accounting procedures to the products (students) produced. Others define accountability in terms of the scores made by students on pencil and paper tests. They would judge the quality of the products produced in the schools by testing and retesting (perhaps searching for the "right" test which would "validate" the objectives of the curriculum planners). Still others define accountability in terms of the demands placed upon the educational system by the public at large.

Accountability to parents and the general public is not one concept, but is many different concepts. Bowers referred to this when he said,

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Lessinger, like other advocates of accountability, makes the mistake of treating the public as a unitary entity that shares a common set of values and expectations. This is surprising because most knowledgeable teachers, school administrators, and school board members know that their communities are composed of interest groups that have different and often opposing expectations. They also know that these interest groups wield differing amounts of power. When one takes the idea of accountability out of its rhetorical context—where it is often used as a political slogan—and attempts to implement it in a pluralistic community, it becomes obvious that it is not as clear and as workable a concept as its advocates claim.[1]

In general, when the public hears of accountability it brings to mind the hope of a greater responsiveness on the part of the public schools to the local school communities. Many large urban school systems have grown to the size where they are not, or cannot be, very responsive to the demands of the parents and the general public. These school systems are experiencing what might be called "bureaucratic arteriosclerosis." In other words, these large systems are of such a size that they are unresponsive to the needs of the communities which they serve. This unresponsiveness has created alienated students, dissatisfied parents, frustrated teachers and administrators, and in general, an unhealthy educational climate.[2] Parents, crying for more responsiveness on the part of the schools which serve them, are saying the same thing that Conant said ten years ago, that "decisions made in the central office are remote from the many diverse neighborhoods that constitute the city and may or may not make sense in a particular school."[3]

Frequently, educational diets formulated at the central office will not be compatible with the needs in many schools and the school communities which they serve. An educational program formulated at the central level will need to be so compromised in order to meet the needs of the many schools and school communities in a large urban area that the finished program will have been

[1] C. A. Bowers. "Accountability from a Humanist Point of View." *The Educational Forum* 35 (4): 480; May 1971.

[2] Task Force on Urban Education. "Decentralization, Community Control, Governance of the Education Profession." *Today's Education* 58 (2); 59; February 1969.

[3] James Bryant Conant. *Slums and Suburbs.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961.

compromised to mediocrity. What can happen in formulating educational programs in a decentralized system, the converse of the "central office diet," was described very succinctly by Chicago's Superintendent of Schools, James F. Redmond:

> It is heartening to come into cabinet meetings and hear the associates talking about what we are doing with our district superintendents, principals, and teachers to meet specific school and community needs. Less and less are we discussing citywide educational diets; more and more are we getting to the heart of what must be done in the inner city, which is different from the school which resembles a suburban community school; and what must be done in the school that covers an industrial area; and in the schools that serve fringe areas. Our administrators are accepting leadership responsibilities—and this is promising.[4]

Typically, the organization of school systems has been pyramidal in form, with the school board at the top and the teachers and students at the bottom. Perhaps what the general public is asking is that this pyramid be inverted, placing the students at the top of the pyramid. Immediately below the students in the inverted pyramid would be the teachers, then the principals, and somewhere below the principal level would be the central office staff. In such a drastically reformed organizational design perhaps the students would come out on top. In this organizational design one might find that one of the best things that teachers could do, at times, would be to get out of the way of the students and let them learn—so often teaching is equated with learning, an assumption which is not always true.

Again, in this organizational design, one of the best things that principals could do, would be to get out of the way of teachers and let them teach, and so on down throughout the organizational design with those individuals in positions at lower levels getting out of the way of those at the levels above them, freeing them to accomplish the tasks for which they were employed. This almost

[4] James F. Redmond. "Efforts To Desegregate and Decentralize the Administration of a Large City School System." In: Carroll F. Johnson and Michael D. Usdan, editors. *Equality of Educational Opportunity in the Large Cities of America: The Relationship Between Decentralization and Racial Integration.* Report of a Special Training Institute on Problems of School Desegregation, Teachers College, Columbia University, July 10-12, 1968. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1968.

begins to sound like some form of accountability, with the individuals at the "lower levels" providing help, assistance, support, and reinforcement in working to provide the best possible educational climate for the students at the top. At an American Management Association Education and Training Conference, Donald Thomas, Superintendent of the Newark, California, United School District stated:

> People are no longer willing to sit passively and let the Superintendent think and decide for them. This was the old way of playing the game and there were too many losers. Decentralization protects the system from a win-lose situation. It may be our only way to gain public confidence in the schools.[5]

Organizational "Brains" and "Hands"

Principals, teachers, and school communities are no longer accepting the traditional monocratic, bureaucratic type of organization. They are not accepting the type of old organization described by Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock*. Toffler described the old system as one based upon the unspoken assumption that the dirty, sweaty people down below cannot make sound decisions. Only those in the upper levels of the hierarchy are to be trusted to make judgmental decisions. Officials at the top would make decisions, while the people at the bottom would carry them out. In other words, one group would represent the brains of the organization and the other, the hands.

Toffler went on to state that this typical bureaucratic operation was ideally suited to solving routine problems at a moderate pace, but with the acceleration of the pace of life, problems ceased to be routine. As a result, shortcuts that bypass the hierarchy are now increasingly being employed in thousands of organizations, including school systems. This, then, results in a massive shift from vertical to lateral communication systems. This process represents a major blow to the once-sacred bureaucratic hierarchy, and as Toffler says, it punches a jagged hole in the "brain and hands" analogy. As the bureaucratic chain of command is increasingly bypassed, the teach-

[5] Donald Thomas. As reported in: *Education Summary*. New London, Connecticut: Croft Educational Services, October 1, 1971. p. 2.

ers and students begin to make decisions—decisions that in the past were reserved for the "higher ups." [6]

Daniel Griffiths made a similar observation more than a decade ago in his book, *Administrative Theory*, regarding the changing role of the organization. He stated,

> It is not the function of the chief executive to make decisions; it is his function to monitor the decision-making process to make certain that it performs at the optimum level. The effectiveness of the chief executive is inversely proportional to the number of decisions which he must personally make concerning the affairs of the organization.[7]

Applying Griffiths' postulate within school systems, Featherstone and Hill made the observation that teachers and administrators in the various learning units of the city should be able to make decisions relating to education and administration without restrictions of a bureaucratic chain of regulations and superimposed subjective judgments made by superiors.[8]

Because of the unresponsiveness of the many urban school systems, a great number of school boards have considered, or are considering, attempts at reorganization in the form of decentralization. At the Eleventh Annual Conference on Elementary School Problems in Large Cities, held in Jacksonville, Florida, it was noted that the vast majority of the large city school systems represented had decentralized their administrative organizations or were considering doing so. As Melvin Barnes, former Superintendent of the Portland Public Schools wrote:

> At the moment, no topic in education, except possibly sex education, is getting more attention than decentralization and local control. Larger districts are splitting into areas for the sake of more responsive, sensitive administration. Typically each area is supervised by a director whose office is in his area—where the schools, the children, the teachers, the parents, and the problems are. Decentralization works. Area directors become the right arm of the superintendent and the principal's main

[6] Alvin Toffler. *Future Shock*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1970.

[7] Daniel Griffiths. *Administrative Theory*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959.

[8] Richard L. Featherstone and Frederick W. Hill. "Urban School Decentralization, Part I." *American School and University*, October 1968. p. 48.

support in implementing policies and in conducting a continual stream of facts and data right out of the real world of the school and the community. Responsiveness and accountability to local citizens are enhanced.[9]

Even if the decision to formally decentralize the administrative structure is not forthcoming, responsibilities for much of the decision making within the centralized organizational structure can be delegated to an appropriate level within the system. Although it will be somewhat more difficult, it is still possible within the traditional organization to strive for those values which James F. Redmond said must be prized even in a decentralized organization:

> Decentralization, as I see it, must bring about that overworked cliché—sensitivity. More and more I am trying to say the same thing in a different way. Each of us in an administrative capacity in the Chicago Public Schools must listen more, observe more, comprehend more, and understand more.[10]

Accountability need not bring about the dehumanization of the educational process. By making the large urban school systems more responsive to the general public through decentralization efforts, greater "accountability" will be achieved. Luvern Cunningham pointed out in an address at the American Association of School Administrators convention in 1970 that society is faced with the problem of how to maximize the bigness and the smallness of a situation. In the case of a school system, the task is how to retain the economy of scale on one hand and increase the responsiveness of the school system on the other.[11] It would be the contention of the advocates of decentralization that this approach is a step in the right direction in accomplishing that task.

[9] Melvin Barnes. "The Administrator's Role in Humanizing the School." *The Elementary School: Humanizing? Dehumanizing?* Washington, D.C.: National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1971.

[10] Redmond, *op. cit.*

[11] Luvern Cunningham. Address at the American Association of School Administrators Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 1970.

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